Ren Xiaoyan
Yangtze University, Jingzhou, China

Research on english reading teaching in senior high school based on discourse analysis theory

Ren Xiaoyan

DOI: https://doi.org/10.33545/26649845.2024.v6.i1c.107

Abstract
In senior high school English teaching, reading is the main content and also one of the ways for students to improve their comprehensive English ability. The main teaching task of teachers is to strengthen English reading teaching and improve students' reading ability in senior high school. However, the traditional reading teaching pays too much attention to vocabulary grammar and ignores the whole teaching of the text.

Discourse analysis is a process based on discourse that makes language produce meaning in a text. The application of discourse analysis theory in English teaching is a top-down change to the traditional English teaching. Discourse analysis should include the training of context analysis, the analysis of discourse structure and the analysis of sentence coherence and so on. In the process of reading, it is the direction of discourse analysis that readers should understand the author's language. In order to understand the author's language, readers should not only analyze the structure and theme of the article in combination with the overall context of the article, but also have enough knowledge reserves and rich language knowledge.

Based on the concept of the English Curriculum Standards for Ordinary Senior Middle Schools, this paper discusses how to guide students to grasp the theme, content, stylistic features and linguistic features of a text and explore the thematic meaning based on the theory of discourse analysis, taking the discourse of Reading and Thinking as an example: Chinese Writing System: connecting the past and the present (From Senior One English Compulsory Course 1 Unit 5 Language Around The World).

Keywords: Discourse analysis reading teaching senior high school

Introduction
Most senior high school English teachers believe that reading teaching is easy. As long as they have sufficient vocabulary and skillfully use grammar, they can easily get high scores. Under the long-term guidance of this teaching philosophy, teachers have always focused on teaching vocabulary and grammar in the classroom, and have always pursued a mechanical teaching model which regards vocabulary as the focus and grammar as the core [4]. And this teaching model also confines the students' thinking in the stereotype which focuses on the learning of words, phrases and grammar. Therefore, the lack of adequate understanding and control of the whole article has resulted in a serious lack of discourse awareness, which has inhibited the improvement of senior high school students' reading ability.
The English Curriculum Standards for Ordinary Senior Middle Schools (2020) clearly puts forward "the curriculum content of six elements including the theme context, language knowledge, cultural knowledge, language skills and learning strategies". These six elements are interrelated, among which discourse bears the learning of the other five elements, that is to say, all language activities are based on various types of discourse. Discourse type, also generally refers to genres and includes different types of common writing styles, such as expository writing, practical writing, narrative writing, argumentative writing, etc. [11]. The curriculum standard requires students to be familiar with the common discourse forms in life, grasp the general structure of different types of discourse, and grasp the unique discourse characteristics and expressions of different types of discourse.
The new curriculum standard states that "it is necessary to design and implement teaching in the unit of discourse, that is, English reading teaching design should aim at the exploration of thematic meaning, take discourse as the carrier, integrate knowledge learning and skill development in the language practice activities of understanding and expression, build

Corresponding Author:
Ren Xiaoyan
Yangtze University, Jingzhou, China

structured knowledge through perception, prediction, acquisition, analysis, generalization, comparison, evaluation, innovation and other thinking activities, and develop the quality of thinking in the process of analyzing and solving problems to cultivate cultural understanding and shape students' correct outlook on life and values, ultimately promoting the formation and development of English core literacy". Therefore, the key to achieving the above goals is to attach importance to the basic position of discourse teaching, adopt a reasonable reading teaching model and implement an efficient English teaching method. By the way, the popular teaching method of discourse analysis reading in recent years has obvious advantages in solving the problems existing in current reading teaching. The discourse analysis reading teaching method generally follows the model of "activating background knowledge before reading, predicting the following, conducting macro analysis, micro analysis, language knowledge processing during reading, and consolidating article content and language knowledge after reading" and the "five step reading teaching model", that is, "pre-reading, reading, responding, exploring, and applying" [8]. This model gives consideration to the subjectivity of students' reading and the predictive role of content schema in students' reading and it can also help students construct formal schema and accumulate language schema, which has been greatly improved compared with the previous reading lesson model. In a word, the theory of discourse analysis advocates that students should read the text from the perspective of overall understanding of the text, which plays an important role in cultivating students' English thinking mode and discourse analysis ability [10]. Based on the actual English teaching in senior high schools, this paper explores the role of discourse analysis theory in English reading teaching and its application strategies, with a view to providing strategies for effectively improving students' English reading ability.

Literature Review
Definition of discourse analysis theory
A discourse is a linguistic whole consisting of a series of consecutive paragraphs or sentences. Discourse analysis refers to the description and interpretation of the surface and structure features of a text to find the internal rules of discourse cohesion and coherence, and the analysis of the background knowledge, structure, vocabulary, grammar and the logical relationship between sentences of an article through making a macro and micro analysis of the article [15]. From a macro perspective, discourse analysis refers to understanding and mastering the overall artistic conception of the whole text, breaking through the reading methods and habits of reading words and phrases one by one, and paying all attention to the central idea, key sentences, the cohesion between upper and lower sentences and the connection between paragraphs. On the micro level, it is a way to quickly identify textual cohesion by analyzing the meaning of words, the cohesion between sentences, and the accurate use of grammar [12].

Research status of discourse analysis
The famous British linguist Fith pointed out in the 1930s that linguists should study the meaning of language in context and the relationship between language form and meaning. Although he did not carry out in-depth research on this issue, it accelerated the process of bringing discourse into the track of linguistic research.

In 1952, the famous American linguist, Zling Haris, published a paper entitled *Discourse Analysis* on the magazine *Language*, pointing out that "language does not exist in words and sentences, but in connected discourses. Discourse is a language unit, emphasizing language behaviors and activities, and learners' ability to use language for communication." This view breaks the situation of taking sentences as the largest unit of language research in traditional linguistics, and for the first time incorporates the term "discourse analysis". So it is regarded as the origin of modern discourse linguistics. Since then, discourse analysis has been widely used as a professional term of modern linguistics.

In the 1960s, discourse analysis has made significant progress. First, Barthes, Greimash, Metz and other scholars analyzed narrative discourse from the perspective of semiotics. At the same time, sociologist Hymes (1972) [3] proposed the descriptive methods, concepts, terms and theoretical frameworks of discourse patterns of speech communities to guide discourse analysis, and found the discourse rules of various speech communities. These studies have gradually become the anthropology of "discourse culture", which constitutes an important part of language use. Halliday (1976) [2] also used systemic function to analyze the relationship between sentences and discourses. He points out the three functions of the language being used: ideational, interpersonal, and textual, and points out that discourse and the other two functions promote each other.

In the 1970s, scholars from different regions used different research theories and methods to study discourse analysis, and monographs and collections on discourse analysis began to come out in batches. Sociology began to analyze daily communicative speech. American sociologists Sacks, Schegloff, Jefferson and others created "conversational analysis", which reveals the structure of the conversation. And the Speech Act Theory established by linguists Austin (1962)[1] and Grice has also become a theoretical framework for discourse analysis. Gumporz and Hymes (1976) [3] explored a new approach to discourse analysis from the perspective of speech acts in different social and cultural environments.

After the 1980s, discourse analysis has made great progress. *Discourse*, edited by Van Dyck, a Dutch scholar, was published in a stop style. It includes the latest achievements in discourse analysis. The topics include conversation analysis, discourse grammatical structure, computer simulation of natural language, and cross-cultural scope of communicative competence. *Discourse Procedures*, which Van Dyck and Freedle edited, became a professional academic journal in the field of discourse analysis [12].

The study of discourse analysis started relatively late in China. It was not until the late 1980s that discourse analysis, as a new frontier science, began to emerge, and then it was closely integrated with foreign language teaching [18]. In 1988, Huang Guowen published the *Summary of Discourse Analysis* introducing the theoretical basis and concepts of discourse analysis. This is the first English book in China. And the works on discourse analysis may also be the earliest books that systematically introduce the theory of discourse analysis in China. The book points out: "Discourse usually refers to the language as a whole consisting of a series of

consecutive paragraphs or sentences. In terms of communication form, it can be monologue or dialogue; in terms of length, the short one can be a sentence or a poem, and the long one can be a piece or a volume."

Hu Zhuanglin (1994) [9] believed in *Cohesion and Coherence of Discourse* that "discourse refers to any natural language that is not completely bound by sentence grammar and expresses complete semantics in a certain context". As long as two or more sentences are connected with each other in semantics and grammar, language coherence can be reflected and discourse can be formed. Discourse analysis is a linguistic means that enables readers to scientifically and systematically analyze how the corresponding position of language materials in the text produces meaning, and identify the structural patterns in the text and specify the marks of these structural patterns.

Cheng Xiaotang (2005) [5] pointed out that textual coherence includes thematic structure, information structure and propositional macro structure in his paper *Research on textual coherence based on functional linguistics*. In order to make the discourse appear organized and logical, the discourse must make full use of a variety of micro and macro structures, and maintain the continuity of the topic locally and as a whole.

After so many research, the importance of discourse analysis in the teaching has been widely recognized and the country has set a special curriculum about it. The Department of Foreign Languages in normal universities has included discourse linguistics as a special subject in their teaching plans, and has offered courses such as "discourse analysis" and "text linguistics" to help students have a better understanding of the discourse analysis theory [7].

Text Analysis and English Reading Teaching
As a new discipline, discourse analysis is a result of summing up and absorbing the views of many disciplines, such as pure linguistics, psychology, semiotics, human linguistics and sociolinguistics. The 1970s and 1980s can be said to be a period of liberation of educational linguistics [16]. With the continuous deepening of foreign language teaching theory research and the continuous improvement of teaching methods, text linguistics, as an independent discipline, has been paid more and more attention by foreign language teaching, and has become increasingly prominent in English reading teaching. The new round of senior high school curriculum reform puts forward new requirements for senior high school students' comprehensive language application ability. Therefore, nowadays discourse teaching has been highly valued and become a new and important teaching method in English discourse reading teaching.

Reading teaching based on discourse analysis theory
Taking the discourse of Unit 5 of Compulsory Course 1: The Chinese writing system: connecting the past and the

present as an example, this paper tries to analyze and teach it from the macro and micro perspectives based on the theory of discourse analysis.

The skills of discourse macro analysis mainly refer to the teaching of the background knowledge and genre structure of the reading materials. The cultural and historical background of text creation and the author's life background will affect students' understanding of specific texts [17]. When students are familiar with the theme frame of the discourse, they will have a clear idea to understand the whole text. Therefore, in the teaching of reading, teachers should consciously introduce the style or text mode, so that students can be familiar with various writing topics and ways of composition.

Predict the main content of the text from the title
When reading a discourse, do not start reading directly, but carefully read the title of the article first. The title is the eye of an article, which is often a high generalization of the content of the text. With the help of the title, we can quickly predict the category of the fields involved in this paper [13]. When reading, we should also pay attention to the bold or italicized parts of the text, because these are often the content that the author wants to emphasize or the framework of the text.

For example, before reading the discourse, try to predict what the passage will talk about.

The Chinese Writing System: Connecting the Past and the Present
Let's look at the title together. We can see it has two lines. The first line is the Chinese writing system and it is our topic. The second line is connecting the past and the present and it is our focus. So the keyword is the writing system. According to the topic and the focus, we can predict that the passage may talk about the development or the introduction or the history of the Chinese writing system. After making a prediction, students are clear about the content of the discourse and are well prepared to begin reading. So prediction is conducive to improving reading speed and reading comprehension.

Skim the text to find the topic sentence
The topic sentence is the core of a text paragraph, and most of the paragraphs revolve around a central sentence layer by layer, step by step. Generally speaking, the topic sentence is usually at the beginning of a paragraph. These paragraphs generally follow the writing procedure from general to individual, that is, start with an overview, and then explain, demonstrate and develop the idea of the topic sentence.

For example, after prediction, let students skim the text and find the topic sentence of each paragraph. And then we can draw a table.

Table 1: The main idea of each paragraph

Para 1	One main factor of the ancient Chinese civilization is the Chinese writing system.
Para 2	At the beginning, written Chinese was a picture-based language.
Para 3	Chinese writing system became well-developed into different forms.
Para 4	The writing system began to develop in one direction.
Para 5	Written Chinese connects China's present with its past.
Para 6	Today the Chinese language is helping to spread China's culture and history.

From the table we can see, the topic sentence of the paragraph is the last sentence while the topic sentences of other paragraphs are the first sentence in the paragraph. After listing the topic sentence of each paragraph, students are able to have an overview of the article and know that the discourse talks about the development of the Chinese writing system which also checks previous prediction. Therefore, when reading a text, first quickly grasp the topic sentences of each paragraph, which is conducive to quickly and accurately grasp the main content of each paragraph and the theme of the whole text.

Know various text patterns and understand the structure and content of the text
To sum up the writing modes of English texts, there are four common genres: narration, description, argumentation and exposition. Although articles of various genres have their own writing characteristics, they also have commonalities. There are three common structural models of English discourse: the first is the problem - solving model. In this kind of discourse, the author often follows the principle of "contradiction-intensification-solve", "problem-analysis - measure (Or conclusion)", "phenomenon-consequence-suggestion", etc. The second is a general special mode. In this kind of discourse, the author often plans the layout of the text according to the model of "phenomenon-analysis-conclusion", "theory-definition-example", etc. The third is the analogy contrast mode. In this kind of discourse, the author often plans the layout of the text according to "things-advantages and disadvantages-conclusions", "phenomena - other people's views - author's views" and other models [6].

In addition, the mode of the paragraph may be "top sentence, developing sentence, transitional sentence" model. And in the process of organizing these sentences, the author may use some writing methods, such as listing, narration, time and space, cause and effect, comparison and contrast, classification, etc.

For example, after knowing the main idea of each paragraph and being clear about the content of the discourse, let students find expressions referring to the time and list the events according to the time clues. Here is the table.

Table 2: The timeline of the Chinese writing

At the beginning	A picture-based language
By the Shang Dynasty (Around 1600-1046 BC)	A well-developed writing system
Over the years	Varieties of dialects and characters
Qin Dynasty(221-207BC)	A unified system
Today(In modern times)	A vital part of Chinese culture

Having making the timeline and finishing the table, student are clear about the organization of the text and the content. Therefore, it's time to divide the text into some parts and find the main idea of each part. From above mentioned discussion, we can know there are three common structural models of discourse. And this passage belongs to the second mode, that is the general special mode. The author plans the layout of the text according to the model of phenomenon-analysis-conclusion. So divide the text into three parts as follows:

Table 3: The structure of the passage

Part 1	para 1	Topic
Part 2	para 2--para 3	History
Part 3	para 4--para 6	Importance

Finally, after finishing the timeline and dividing the structure, let students try to answer these two questions.
1. What is the writing style？
A. Narration. B. Argument. C. Exposition
2. In what order is the article written？

A. Time. B. Place. C. Person
Then introduce the structure and the feature of the exposition to students. Expository writing is a genre of writing in which the main expression is illustration. The center of the exposition is clear and prominent, the article is scientific, organized, and the language is precise and vivid. There are four types of expository structure: total fraction, parallelism, coherence and progression. This passage belongs to the first kind. After the introduction, students are able to understand the structure and the content of the discourse thoroughly. It can be seen that if we are familiar with the genre and writing characteristics of the text, we can predict the structure of the text to be read and change the passive reading psychology. In the process of reading, students should always grasp the context of the text at the macro level, maintain the right sense of direction, distinguish the main information and details of the text, and easily understand the general idea of the text.

The main task of discourse understanding is to connect text and meaning as a whole by using the macro analysis skills of text. However, the overall meaning of a text is organically combined through partial meanings of the text. It can be seen that the micro analysis skill focusing on the part of the text is an important part of the text understanding. Micro analysis generally includes textual cohesion theory, theme rheme theory, transitivity and so on. Micro analysis is not only to teach the meaning and usage of words, phrases or long and difficult sentences from the perspective of language learning as in traditional English teaching, but also to enable students to master the skills of purposefully identifying information, selecting and summarizing main information on the basis of the overall meaning of the text. Teachers can explore the author's writing intention, strengthen the facts and details of the theme of the text, and enable students to understand the author's feelings, attitudes and values in depth.

Theory of textual cohesion
The concept of cohesion was first proposed in Halliday and Hasan's book Cohesion in English. It refers to the grammatical and lexical relationship between the elements within the texts. It is not grammatical coherence, but semantic coherence. It makes a single independent language fragment echo back and forth into a whole, and it can also highlight a certain part of the language. Discourse cohesion enables people to recognize the world around them and their inner world experience, and express their objective experience and subjective views of the world [14].

The cohesion of a text can be divided into explicit cohesion and implicit cohesion. Explicit cohesion can be realized by means of textual cohesion, such as reference, substitution, ellipsis, conjunction and lexical cohesion. Implicit cohesion is realized by linguistic or non-linguistic factors other than textual cohesive devices. Halliday and Hasan (1976) [2] classified cohesion into four types: reference, ellipsis and substitution, conjunction, and lexical cohesion.

(1) Reference
Reference relation refers to the use of pronouns and other grammatical relations to express semantic relations. In English, reference means include personal reference (He, she, it, him, they, etc.), demonstrative reference (This, that, these, these, etc.), comparative reference (Such, the same as, equal, similarly, differently, other, otherwise, etc.) Taking the discourse as an example, let's see the reference in the discourse.

1. Personal reference
China is widely known for its ancient civilization which has continued all the way through into modern times. (Para 1)
Here "it" refers to China.
It dates back several thousand years to the use of longgu. (Para 2)
Here "it" refers to the written Chinese.
No matter where Chinese people live or what dialect they speak, they can still communicate in writing.(Para 4)
Here "they" refers to the Chinese people.

2. Demonstrative reference
There are many reasons why this has been possible. (Para 1)
These symbols had become a well-developed writing system. (Para 3)
That writing system was of great importance in uniting the Chinese people and culture. (Para 4)
Here "this", "these", "that" are demonstrative references.

(2) Conjunction
Conjunction is the relationship indicating how the subsequent sentence or clause should be linked to the preceding or the following part of the sentence. Halliday and Hasan divided it into four kinds: addictive, adversative, temporal, casual. Let's see the conjunction in the discourse.

1. Adversative
There are many reasons why this has been possible, but one of the main factors has been the Chinese writing system. (Para 1)
This, however, changed under Emperor Qingshihuang of the Qin Dynasty. (Para 3)
Here "but" "however" are the adversative conjunctions.

2. Temporal
At the beginning, written Chinese was a picture-based language.(Para 2)
Today, the Chinese writing system is still an important part of Chinese culture.(Para 6)
Here "at the beginning" "today" are the temporal conjunctions.

3. Casual
As China plays a greater role in global affairs, an increasing number of international students are beginning to appreciate China's culture and history through this amazing language. (Para 6)
Here "as" is the casual conjunction.

(3) Lexical cohesion
Lexical cohesion includes repetition, synonym, hyponymy, antonym, and collocations. They are cohesive devices and semantically related lexical items in a text. As in the second paragraph:
"At the beginning, written Chinese was a picture-based language. It dates back several thousand years to the use of longgu--animal bones and shells on which symbols were carved by ancient Chinese people. Some of the ancient symbols can still be seen in today's hanzi."
Repetition: "symbol" in the second line and the "ancient symbol" in the third line
Synonym: "written Chinese", "symbols", and "hanzi" are synonyms while "longgu" and "animal bones and shells" are synonyms.

Theme and rheme theory
Theme and rheme theory describes a kind of information arrangement that the writer or speaker intends to highlight different information or give importance to a sentence or a paragraph. Theme is a formal category that refers to the leftmost element at the beginning of a sentence or clause. It is the element around which the sentence is organized. It is also the element that the writer wants to highlight. All the components that follow the theme are called rheme. Theme and rheme form a "thematic structure". The theme of the text predicts the emergence of the theme of the paragraph, and the theme of the paragraph is subordinate to and serves the theme of the whole text. And the theme above the clause level can be explicit or implicit, and can be placed at the head of a text, paragraph, or elsewhere. Only the subject of a clause is always at the beginning of the sentence [14].
By arranging the theme of each sentence in a text, we can clearly see a thematic structure framework of the text, and readers can quickly grasp the author's thinking according to this framework, thus shortening the text reading process. Then let's see the theme and rheme in the whole discourse.
First, we can list the topic sentence of each paragraph to get the main idea of each paragraph.
1. One of the main factors has been the Chinese writing system.(Para 1)
2. At the beginning, written Chinese was a picture- based language. (Para 2)
3. By the Shang Dynasty (around 1600-1046 BCE), these symbols had become a well-developed writing system.(Para 3)
4. Emperor Qinshihuang united the seven major states into one unified country where the Chinese writing system began to develop in one direction. (Para 4)
5. Written Chinese has also become an important means by which China's present is connected with its past. (Para 5)
6. Today, the Chinese writing system is still an important part of Chinese culture. (Para 6)

The thematic structure of the text is: *one of the main factors---at the beginning---by the Shang Dynasty---emperor Qinshihuang---written Chinese---today.* So students can know the scope of the author's topic and the arrangement of the text. The author organized the text in time order and

gave some important time nodes, such as at the beginning, Shang Dynasty, Qin Dynasty. The text first introduces the topic and then demonstrates the development of the Chinese writing system in different periods and finally shows its importance in today and draws a conclusion.

In summary, the reader can see what the author wants to talk about and what the order is from the thematic sequence of the text itself. In the teaching of reading, students should be guided to grasp the author's thematic structure arrangement, so as to grasp the author's purpose [16]. With the help of the thematic structure framework, they can accurately understand the information structure of the text. Mastering the thematic structure makes the process of recalling simple, which can effectively make up for the defect that students in traditional reading teaching need to read repeatedly to fully grasp the information of the text.

Conclusion

To sum up, reading is a complex process of interaction between language and thinking. The modes and levels of reading involve various aspects of knowledge and ability, such as linguistic knowledge, non-linguistic knowledge and reading skills. The new teaching mode of reading -- discourse teaching shifts from syntactic analysis to discourse analysis, and shifts from language form to language function. Discourse is not a simple stack of sentences, but based on the meaning of expression and reflected as language symbols, so the sentences and paragraphs are semantically coherent. Therefore, discourse teaching should be carried out as a whole, rather than segmented and isolated. By introducing the theory of discourse analysis into high school English reading teaching, teachers can help students enrich English cultural connotation, develop good reading habits, and improve the teaching effect and quality of English reading.

References

1. Austin JL. How to Do Things with Words. Oxford: Oxford University Press; c1962.
2. Halliday MAK, Hasan. Cohesion in English. London: Longman Group limited; c1976.
3. Hymes. On communicative competence. In Pride and Holmes: Sociolinguistics. Harmondsworth: Penguin; c1972.
4. 陈晓燕.语篇意识培养在高中英语阅读理解中的实践研究[J].西部素质教育. 2015;(12):85-86.
5. 程晓堂.基于功能语言学的语篇连贯研究.外语研究出版社; c2005.
6. 代文中.基于语篇分析视角的高中英语阅读教学实践研究[J].安徽教育科研. 2022;(29):18-20.
7. 冯光财,戴吾蛟.论测绘论文英文摘要的语篇衔接-功能语言学视角[J].长春大学学报,2022,32(07):40-44.
8. 冯丽娣.语篇衔接与阅读理解——语篇分析理论在高中英语阅读教学中的应用[J].科技创新导报. 2017;14(03):230-231.
9. 胡壮麟.语篇的衔接与连贯.上海:上海外语教育出版社; c1994.
10. 李海涛.语篇分析理论在高中英语阅读教学中的应用研究[C].东北师范大学; c2006.
11. 申静静.语篇分析理论视域下的高中英语阅读教学应用研究[J].校园英语. 2021;(29):181-182.
12. 万珊.语篇分析理论在高中英语阅读教学中的应用[C].南京师范大学; c2011.
13. 王蓓.英语语篇分析理论研究[J].黑龙江教育学院学报. 2014;33(06):155-156.
14. 魏静姝.语篇的衔接和阅读理解[J].外语教学. 1996;(01:45-51+34.
15. 吴文.语篇分析理论在英语翻译中的运用分析[J].英语广场. 2022;(12):51-53.
16. 徐月形.语篇分析在高中英语阅读理解教学中的有效应用研究[C].华东师范大学; c2010.
17. 尹海燕.基于语篇分析理论的大学英语阅读教学实践[J].沈阳大学学报(社会科学版). 2022;(05):542-549.
18. 张云艳.基于语篇分析理论的初中英语阅读教学行动研究[C].贵州师范大学; c2022.

Appendix
The discourse is from unit 5 of compulsory book one in high school.

The Chinese writing system
Connecting the past and the present
China is widely known for its ancient civilization which has continued all the way through into modern times, despite the many ups and downs in its history. There are many reasons why this has been possible, but one of the main factors has been the Chinese writing system.

At the beginning, written Chinese was a picture- based language. It dates back several thousand years to the use of longgu--animal bones and shells on which symbols were carved by ancient Chinese people. Some of the ancient symbols can still be seen in today's hanzi.

By the Shang Dynasty (Around 1600-1046 BCE), these symbols had become a well-developed writing system. Over the years, the system developed into different forms, as it was a time when people were divided geographically, leading to many varieties of dialects and characters. This, however, changed under Emperor Qinshihuang of the Qin Dynasty (221-207BCE).

Emperor Qinshihuang united the seven major states into one unified country where the Chinese writing system began to develop in one direction. That writing system was of great importance in uniting the Chinese people and culture. Even today, no matter where Chinese people live or what dialect they speak, they can all still communicate in writing.

Written Chinese has also become an important means by which China's present is connected with its past. People in modern times can read the classic works which were written by Chinese in ancient times. The high regard for the Chinese writing system can be seen in the development of Chinese characters as an art form, known as Chinese calligraphy, which has become an important part of Chinese culture.

Today, the Chinese writing system is still an imp ortant part of Chinese culture. As China plays a greater role in global affairs, an increasing number of international students are beginning to appreciate China's culture and history through this amazing language.